

PATRIARCH KIRILL AND METROPOLITAN HILARION ON RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND SECULAR WAR IN UKRAINE: A DIACHRONIC STUDY OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS' MESSAGES

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Abstract. This paper analyses the public messages of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow¹ and Metropolitan Hilarion² 30 days before³ and one hundred days after⁴ the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 (hereinafter: invasion). The findings demonstrate that the main speaker for the Russian Orthodox Church (hereinafter: ROC) on issues related to secular and religious conflicts in Ukraine was Metropolitan Hilarion in the pre-invasion phase and Patriarch Kirill after the invasion had started. Their messages were identical on themes related to the 'Russian world' (e.g., that spiritually fraternal peoples do not fight, that war in Ukraine takes place on the Russian territory, or that Russia's involvement in wars in history and the present day have aimed to liberate or protect spiritually fraternal peoples). They both condemn Western values, blame the West for the imposition of post-Christian values on both Russia and Ukraine, and consider the West to be the cause of both historic and present conflicts with Russia.

Patriarch Kirill's messages change mostly after 3 April 2022 when themes (such as 'Lenin, divider of historical Russia', 'approval' of Nazi ideology in Ukraine) used by Putin and Lavrov to legitimate the invasion appeared not extensively, but still one by one into Patriarch Kirill's discourse on Ukraine. In the same period, Hilarion decreases his involvement in public discussions of war in Ukraine and becomes more amicable regarding those Local Orthodox Churches which have recognized the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine (hereinafter OCU). Hilarion's discourse of the role of the ROC in 'wartime' also started to focus on the humanitarian mission

¹ Secular name Vladimir Gundyayev, Patriarch of Moscow since 1 February 2009.

² Secular name Grigory Alfeyev, head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate from March 2009 until 7 June 2022. For detailed analysis of the reasons of the dismissal see **Kilp, A.; Pankhurst, J. G.** 2022. Religious leadership and Critical Junctures in the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine: 104 War Days of Metropolitan Hilarion. – Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe, Vol. 42, No. 7, Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2376>.

³ From 25 January 2022 until 23 February 2022.

⁴ From 24 February 2022 until 3 June 2022.

and on a proper distance between the mission of the Church and the role of the state. Patriarch Kirill, instead, connected the Church and religion to the Russian effort more directly. He used several frames (e.g., ‘internecine strife’; peace conditioned by the unity of Russians and Ukrainians; war in defence of Russian independence; religious blessing makes [Russian] troops victorious) and a rhetorical style (e.g., religious demonization of the enemy) to emphatically contribute to the legitimacy of the Russian war effort and to the strategic narratives of Putin’s regime. The latter are virtually missing in the discourse of Hilarion.

Keywords: Russian invasion of Ukraine, 2022; religion and international relations; war; legitimisation; religious demonisation; inter-Orthodox relations; Orthodox Church of Ukraine; leadership communication; Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow & All Russia; Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev); Russian Orthodox Church.

1. Introduction

The selection of sources for both speakers included messages which dealt with either religious conflict or secular war in Ukraine. This selection resulted in a sample of 23 messages by Patriarch Kirill (and 129 coded quotes) and 33 messages by Metropolitan Hilarion (and 67 coded quotes).

Messages were derived mostly in Russian language from websites of the Moscow Patriarchate (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/>), the Department for External Church Relations (hereinafter DECR) of the ROC (<http://www.mospat.ru/en>), and from the homepage of Metropolitan Hilarion (<https://hilarion.ru/en/>). Translation from Russian was conducted with the help of Microsoft Translator in Microsoft Word.

The design of the study is diachronic. It assesses the dynamic changes of messages over time⁵.

The time from 25 January 2022 to 3 June 2022 is divided into three sub-periods. The pre-invasion period (30 days before the invasion) is for the identification and analysis of the messages of religious leaders related to the conflict and war in Ukraine in the context where a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine had not yet materialized. One hundred days after the start of the Russian invasion is divided into two periods due to the end of Kyiv operations on 2 April 2022 when the initial goal of the Russian state to conquer the Kyiv region and to change the government in Kyiv had failed. Particularly, the messages (both content and tonality) of Patriarch Kirill started to support

⁵ **Widdersheim, M. M.** 2018. Historical Case Study: A Research Strategy for Diachronic Analysis. – Library and Information Science Research, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 144, 145.

the war effort of the Russian state more intensely during the period starting from 3 April 2022.

The scores of selected texts (Table 1) are almost equal (18 or 19) for these three periods. However, the distribution of messages related to the themes of this study is quite uneven—only two messages related to religious or secular conflict in Ukraine were identified for Kirill before 24 February 2022. Similarly, there were no thematic messages found for Hilarion in April 2022.

Table 1. Text selection by speaker and period.

Speaker	Period			Total
	I	II	III	
Patriarch Kirill	2	10	11	23
Metropolitan Hilarion	17	9	7	33
Total	19	19	18	56

I – 25.01.2022–23.02.2022; II – 24.02.2022–02.04.2022; III – 03.04.2022–03.06.2022.

The selection and coding of quotes followed the method of ‘thematic analysis’ by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke.⁶ Topics of interest (messages related to religious or secular conflict in Ukraine)⁷ were predefined (deductive component of this study), while codes, categories and subcategories emerged inductively and from the content of the analysed messages.

The number of ‘coded quotes’ in Table 2 and Table 3 refers to the number of quotes which involved a code. When a segment of the text involved more than one code (for example, two), then the number of coded quotes was calculated accordingly (two). Consequently, the number of ‘coded quotes’ is higher than the number of selected quotes.

Four categories emerged during the process of the iterative coding of messages: RUSSIAN WORLD (16 codes divided into four subcategories); WAR (19 codes divided into 7 subcategories); WEST (12 codes in three subcategories); DECR and MFA⁸ (three codes).

⁶ Braun, V.; Clarke, V. 2021. One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? – *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 328–352.

⁷ The procedure of codifying followed a pattern suggested by John Saldaña: “significant statements” were extracted from the data; the meanings of these statements were clustered into codes; codes were organized into categories and subcategories. Saldaña, J. 2016. *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 4, 200.

⁸ Category DECR and MFA focuses on the collaboration between the Russian state (and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and ROC (and its Department for External Church Relations) in international relations.

Single quotes in the titles of codes and subcategories (e.g., ‘church schism,’ ‘one common Church’) refer to concepts that have a particular and recurring meaning in the narrative of the speaker.

2. Findings

Tables 2 and 3 present numerical data of coded quotes for two speakers without differentiation of tonality (for example, it does not assess or calculate the positive or negative tone in the attitude towards the West or war in the respective codes). The information in these tables measures the quantity of themes discussed. From this perspective, Patriarch Kirill almost did not discuss Ukraine-related issues at all in the first period (two coded quotes), while Metropolitan Hilarion discussed these issues most during the pre-invasion period. During the later periods (II and III in the tables) the pattern reversed—Patriarch Kirill discussed themes of all categories more than Metropolitan Hilarion.⁹

Table 2. Coded quotes in messages and statements of Patriarch Kirill

Categories	Period			Total
	I	II	III	
RUSSIAN WORLD	1	34	20	55
WAR	0	26	28	54
WEST	1	9	9	19
DECR and MFA	0	0	1	1
Total	2	69	58	129

I – 25.01.2022–23.02.2022; II – 24.02.2022–02.04.2022; III – 03.04.2022–03.06.2022.

The quantity of coded quotes indicates that the main speaker for the ROC in issues related to secular and religious conflicts in Ukraine was Metropolitan Hilarion in the pre-invasion phase (34 coded quotes vs 2 coded quotes) and Patriarch Kirill after the invasion (127 coded quotes vs 33 quotes during 100 days after the start of the invasion).

⁹ The only exception is DECR and MFA, which the speakers almost did not discuss after the start of the invasion.

Table 3. Coded quotes in messages and statements of Metropolitan Hilarion

Categories	Period			Total
	I	II	III	
RUSSIAN WORLD	12	20	5	37
WAR	4	2	1	7
WEST	10	3	1	14
DECR and MFA	8	1	0	9
Total	34	26	7	67

I – 25.01.2022–23.02.2022; II – 24.02.2022–02.04.2022; III – 03.04.2022–03.06.2022.

Differences in the quantity of coded quotes are also recognizable in the category RUSSIAN WORLD (Table 4). The qualitative difference (where speakers assess the same situation or event in contrary or dissimilar ways) is recognizable only in two minor aspects. First, Metropolitan Hilarion became more amicable towards the Archbishop of Cyprus in May 2022. Second, his comment to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's (hereinafter: UOC) declaration of independence from the Moscow Patriarchate from 27 May 2022 did not overlap fully with the simultaneous message delivered by the Holy Synod of the ROC.

Kirill and Hilarion agree significantly on themes of all subcategories of the RUSSIAN WORLD, which are linked by the term 'one common' (land, church, history, destiny, identity, culture).¹⁰ The expression 'one common' in the titles of the subcategories highlights that Kirill and Hilarion construct the narrative of the relationship of Russians and Ukrainians closer to the ideal of oneness and to a kind of common identity, which does not co-exist with tensions, divisions or conflict between peoples or regions that inhabit the space of a perceived shared identity.¹¹

¹⁰ The political narrative "that Ukrainians and Russians are treated as offshoots of the same people sharing a common historical legacy, a common Orthodox faith, and, therefore, a common national destiny" appeared first in the 17th century and was fully developed by the mid-19th century. **Kohut, Z. E.** 2001. *Origins of the Unity Paradigm: Ukraine and the Construction of Russian National History (1620–1860)*. – *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, p. 71.

¹¹ In policies regarding Ukraine, the Russian World concept promoted by leaders of the ROC sustains the imperialist nationalism of Putin's regime. Pål Kolstø distinguishes imperialism – which focuses exclusively on state power, military prowess and territorial expansion – from imperialist nationalism – which, in addition, aims at the ethnic dominance of Russians and the Russian language (in the Slavic or Orthodox world). **Kolstø, P.** 2019. 'Is imperialist nationalism an oxymoron?' – *Nations and Nationalism*, Vo. 25, No. 1, pp. 28, 31–36. The foreign policy of the Russian Federation does not always follow the agenda of imperialist nationalism. However, particularly regarding post-2014 Ukraine, the foreign policy of the Russian Federation follows

Table 4. Coded quotes of the category RUSSIAN WORLD

Subcategories and codes	Kirill			Hilarion			Total
	I	II	III	I	II	III	
'One Common Church'	0	22	7	5	11	3	48
ROC unites Russians and Ukrainians (as one flock)		16	5	1	3	1	26
ROC unites Russians and Ukrainians (as one people)		3	1				4
Denial of the autocephalous OCU		2	1	4	8	1	16
'Church schism' caused by political authorities		1					1
'Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been independent from the ROC since 1990'						1	1
Repercussions of 'church schism' in Ukraine on the inter-Orthodox relations	0	5	5	5	9	2	26
Patriarch of Constantinople		2	2	3	5		12
Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa		2	3		2		7
Archbishop of Cyprus					1	2	3
Patriarch of Alexandria		1			1		2
Inter-Orthodox Communion				2			2
'One Common Territory'	1	5	3	2	0	0	11
(Sacred) borders of the Fatherland/Russian land	1		2	2			5
Common (historical) Russian land		5					5
Code: Lenin, divider of historical Russia			1				1
'One Common Political Identity'	0	2	5	0	0	0	7
Code: Unity of the historical Russia/Russian world			4				4
Code: Common history/destiny		2					2
Code: De-legitimization of the Ukrainian statehood			1				1
Total	1	34	20	12	20	5	92

I – 25.01.2022–23.02.2022; II – 24.02.2022–02.04.2022; III – 03.04.2022–03.06.2022.

the pattern of imperialist nationalism contributed by the religious concept of the Russian World. As observed by Kristina Stoeckl, the Russian World concept connects the Russian language and Orthodox religion with the imperial legacy of the Russian Empire. **Stoeckl, K.** 2020. The Russian Orthodox Church and Neo-Nationalism. – Religion and Neo-Nationalism in Europe. Höhne, F; Meireis, T. (eds.). Baden-Baden: Nomos, p. 312. According to Michel Wieviorka, the Russian World concept associates the Russian nation “with the idea of empire, first the empire of the czars and then that of the Soviets” and aims primarily to “reunite those who live in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.” **Wieviorka, M.** 2022. Russia in Ukraine: The social sciences, war, and democracy. – Violence: An International Journal, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 14.

The 'One Common Church' narrative presented by both speakers says that the ROC unites Russians and Ukrainians as one flock and one people who share 'spiritual unity'. According to this approach, there cannot be more than one (legitimate) Orthodox Church in Ukraine.

Before the invasion Patriarch Kirill did not tackle this theme at all, but started to deal with it intensively as the invasion started:

*May the Lord help all of us – Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, all peoples who came from the same root, came out of the Kiev baptismal font, to preserve our spiritual unity, to prevent the division of our Church.*¹²

*And today, when our Church is going through the most difficult period, at least in recent history, when many forces are trying to tear apart the single body of our Church /.../ may the Lord keep in spiritual unity our people and our Church, the great guardian of spiritual culture and Orthodox faith, which formed the single people of the one Holy Russia.*¹³

Metropolitan Hilarion agrees:

*The Ukrainian people want to stay with the Russian people. And this is not a political issue, but a religious one. It should never be confused with politics, because political relations between Russia and Ukraine can be anything, but the wish of the people of the church is to maintain unity.*¹⁴

¹² **Patriarch Kirill**, 09.03.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on Wednesday of the First Week of Great Lent after the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5907484.html>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 09.03.2022]

¹³ **Patriarch Kirill**, 20.03.2022. Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the Week of the 2nd Great Lent after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5909901.html>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 20.03.2022]

¹⁴ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 26.02.2022. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk's Interview to Orthodoxie.com. <https://hilarion.ru/social/intervyu-mitropolita-volokolamskogo-ilariona-izdaniyu-orthodoxie-com.html>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 26.02.2022]. Here Hilarion emphasises that the Russian World concept is religious (for the Church) and not political. This claim neither decreases nor undermines the political utility ('soft power' or legitimating power) of this narrative. Over the centuries, the concepts Holy Rus and Russian World have been spiritual concepts for the ROC. **Petro, N. N.** 2015. Russia's Orthodox Soft Power. – Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, 23 March. https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/727. Such concepts provide legitimation and are useful to the degree to which they are perceived (by the audiences) to represent pre-political cultural (and historical) facts.

The content related to the code ‘Denial of the autocephalous OCU’¹⁵ was articulated mostly by Metropolitan Hilarion (probably because of the nature of his position as a chairman of DECR) and in all periods of the study. To put it briefly, for ROC, the OCU (autocephalous since 2019) is a manifestation of a ‘schism’ and therefore not a legitimate representation of Orthodoxy in Ukraine. For Hilarion, there is nothing legitimate and canonical in the OCU and its religious practice:

*/.../ the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church stopped communicating with Patriarch Theodore and those bishops of the Patriarchate of Alexandria who supported or in the future will support the legalization of the Ukrainian schism.*¹⁶

*/.../ in the Orthodox Church the choice before the clergy and believers is very simple: are you with the canonical Church or with schismatics?*¹⁷

*The church people do not follow the schismatics, because they understand where the Church is, and where the false church is, where the real bishops are, and where the self-consecrated are.*¹⁸

Kirill agrees, the only “solution” for schismatics would be to repent and reunify with the UOC (of Moscow Patriarchate):

*According to the sacred canons and centuries-old church practice, the admission of Ukrainian schismatics to the Church is possible only after their repentance and reunification with the Local Church from which they fell away, that is, with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.*¹⁹

¹⁵ Recognition of the autocephalous Orthodox of Ukraine in 2018 was instrumental in the construction of Ukraine’s anti-colonial religious narrative in a context where the ROC had promoted the “Russian World” discourse, which sustained and legitimized Russian neo-imperial aggression against Ukraine. The Russian state and the ROC have been united in denial of both Ukrainian spiritual and political sovereignty. **Harned, L. S.** 2022. Russian World and Ukrainian Autocephaly: Religious Narratives in Anti-Colonial Nationalism of Ukraine. – Religions, Vol. 13, No. 4, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040349>.

¹⁶ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 14.03.2022c. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill’s Contribution to Strengthening Inter-Orthodox Unity Against the Backdrop of the Invasion of Ukraine by the Patriarchate of Constantinople (report by Metropolitan Hilarion). <http://mospat.ru/ru/news/89080/>. [hereinafter: **Hilarion**, 14.03.2022c]

¹⁷ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 04.02.2022b. On the Persecution of Christians in Africa told at a Press Conference in Moscow. <https://hilarion.ru/social/o-goneniyakh-na-khristian-afriki-rasskazali-na-press-konferentsii-v-moskve.html>.

¹⁸ **Kirill**, 26.02.2022.

¹⁹ **Patriarch Kirill**, 05.03.2022. Reply of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria. <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89045/>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 05.03.2022]

Hilarion blames the Patriarchate of Constantinople for starting the schism, attacking the common Church with an intent to weaken it and “to tear the Orthodox believers of Ukraine from the Orthodox believers of the entire Russian Orthodox Church.”²⁰

When UOC made a statement of being independent from Moscow on 27 May 2022, Hilarion commented that this statement did not yield any new status to the UOC, “/.../ on the contrary, it has once again confirmed that it has the status of independence and the independence that was given to it back in 1990.”²¹

Similarly, the Holy Synod of ROC (on 29 May 2022) affirmed: “The status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is determined by the Charter given by His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia on 27th October 1990.” However, the Synod also added that any “additions and amendments to the Statute on the Governance of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church /.../ are to be submitted for approval to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.”²² Unlike Hilarion, who argued that the decision of UOC did not change its status, the ROC officially added that UOC did not have any legitimate right to make the abovementioned decision of independence from the Moscow Patriarchate at all.

Hilarion dealt with the theme ‘repercussions of ‘church schism’ in Ukraine on inter-Orthodox relations’ more than Kirill who did not discuss this issue during the pre-invasion period. In this subcategory, nearly half of coded quotes are about Patriarch Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople. He is labelled an enemy of Orthodoxy,²³ blamed for having “legalized the schism” with the goal “to reorient the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in such a way that it can no longer serve the unity of the fraternal Russian and Ukrainian

²⁰ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 08.02.2022. Propaganda of an Unnatural Way of Life is a Great Tragedy of Western Society. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-propaganda-protoivostestvennogo-obraza-zhizni-eto-bolshaya-tragediya-zapadnogo-ob.html>. [hereinafter: **Hilarion**, 08.02.2022]

²¹ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 29.05.2022b. What is Happening in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Should be Understood in the Context of the Unprecedented Pressure Exerted on it. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-proiskhodyashchee-v-ukrainskoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkvi-sleduet-ponimat-v-kontekste-o.html>.

²² **Russian Orthodox Church** 2022b. Minutes of the Holy Synod of 29th May 2022. – 29 May. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/en/db/text/5931476.html>.

²³ Kirill, 05.03.2022

peoples.”²⁴ As claimed by Kirill, the goal of granting the autocephaly (by Patriarch of Constantinople) to the OCU “is to weaken the influence of the Orthodox Church, the united Orthodox Church of Rus, Ukraine and Belarus, using ideological clichés to incite enmity and create new myths that would alienate one group of people from another.”²⁵

Hilarion believes that “[T]he invasion of Ukraine by the Patriarchate of Constantinople has become one of the most acute and dangerous challenges for the Russian Orthodox Church in recent decades.”²⁶

Like President Vladimir Putin, who denies the legitimate agency of the Ukrainian government and considers the West (and NATO) to be his real enemy,²⁷ the religious leaders of the ROC deny the legitimate agency of the autocephalous OCU and consider the Patriarch of Constantinople to be the enemy they face.

In response to this action of the Patriarch of Constantinople, ROC established an Exarchate in Africa (announced on 29 December 2021 and explained in the Statement of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, 28 January 2022).²⁸ The underlying reason for forming an Exarchate of Africa of ROC was in reaction to the recognition of autocephalous OCU by the Patriarch of Alexandria in whose jurisdiction the newly formed Exarchate of Africa of ROC started operating. In his message to Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria, Patriarch Kirill explained the issue and added:

²⁴ **Patriarch Kirill**, 17.05.2022. Speech by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the X Parliamentary Meetings in the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5926129.html>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 17.05.2022]

²⁵ **Kirill**, 17.05.2022.

²⁶ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 15.03.2022. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill’s Contribution to Strengthening Inter-Orthodox Unity against the Backdrop of the Invasion of Ukraine by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. <http://mospat.ru/ru/news/89080/>. [hereinafter: **Hilarion**, 15.03.2022]

²⁷ Vladimir Putin frames the Euro-Maidan Revolution of 2014 as a coup orchestrated by Neo-Nazis and radicals. From that premise he draws the conclusion that all post-2014 Ukrainian governments are illegitimate. **Putin, V.** 2022. The President conducted a meeting on the socioeconomic development of Crimea and Sevastopol, via videoconference. – President of Russia, 17 March. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/68004>. Putin systematically reiterates that Ukraine and its government is not a legitimate agent, but a tool of NATO, the United States and its allies: “Are the Ukrainian people aware /.../ that their country /.../ has been reduced to a colony with a puppet regime?” **Putin, V.** 2022. Address by the President of the Russian Federation. – President of Russia, 21 February. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67828>.

²⁸ **Russian Orthodox Church** 2022a. Statement of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of 28th January 2022. – 28 January. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/en/db/text/5891378.html>.

I have not heard from Your Beatitude what canonical reasons have led you to recognize the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as no longer existing and illegal, and the schismatics who do not have the grace of the priesthood, who are hostile against it, the only canonical “autocephalous church” in this country.²⁹

Hilarion justified the extension of ROC’s activities into the canonical territory of Patriarch of Alexandria similarly:

/.../ the Russian Orthodox Church, not of its own free will, but due to the prevailing circumstances, created the Patriarchal Exarchate in Africa to give canonical asylum to African clergy who did not want to follow the Patriarch of Alexandria in recognizing and legitimizing the Ukrainian schism /.../.³⁰

Hilarion explains that Patriarch Kirill had initially hoped that Patriarch of Alexandria would change his mind. This did not happen. When the Patriarch of Alexandria had “served with the head of the Ukrainian schismatics”, then “[T]his circumstance forced our Church to form the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa for those many African clerics who wish to protect themselves from communion with the schism.”³¹

In October 2020, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus also recognized the (autocephalous) Orthodox Church of Ukraine. In return, in December 2020, the Holy Synod of ROC stopped communicating with Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus.³² This meant that there was to be no normal communication between leaders of ROC and Archbishop of Cyprus. Yet, on 22 May 2022, Hilarion reported that during his stay in Cyprus he had lunch with Archbishop Chrysostomos and had a ‘cordial conversation’ with him over the need to maintain dialogue in inter-Orthodox relations despite the ‘schism in Ukraine’:

I must say that it was a very cordial conversation. Archbishop Chrysostomos during this conversation spoke in great detail about the efforts he made to reconcile the Orthodox Churches. When the decision of the Patriarch of Constantinople to legalize the Ukrainian schism became known, then Archbishop Chrysostomos took on a mediation mission and toured several Local Churches.

²⁹ Kirill, 05.03.2022.

³⁰ Metropolitan Hilarion, 07.02.2022. The Russian Church is Forced to Create its own Parishes on the African Continent. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-russkaya-tserkov-vynuzhdena-sozdavat-svoi-prikhody-na-afrikanskom-kontinente.html>.

³¹ Hilarion, 15.03.2022.

³² Hilarion, 14.03.2022c.

*.../ Its purpose was to clarify the positions of these Local Orthodox Churches on the schism in Ukraine. ... And secondly, I would like to say that, of course, such sad events in the history of relations between the Churches occur from time to time. .../ It seems to me that all these Local Churches understand .../ the need to maintain dialogue, despite what has happened.*³³

This indicated a shift in Hilarion's attitude because in February 2022 he favoured inter-Orthodox consultations only in the format organized by Orthodox Churches (such as Patriarchy of Jerusalem), which had not recognized autocephalous OCU.³⁴

The subcategory 'One Common Territory' deals with the 'Russian world' from the geopolitical focus on the common land and on its (sacred) borders. On 7 April 2022, Patriarch Kirill prayed to God "to preserve the spiritual unity of the Russian land" and asked ".../ why did external forces rise up so much on the Russian land? Why do they seek to destroy it, to divide it, to pit brother against brother?"³⁵

For Kirill, 'Russian land' "now includes Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and other tribes and peoples",³⁶ because the peoples who inhabit the Russian land today "are also united by a single Slavic culture and practically a single history."³⁷

Similarly, Hilarion, who otherwise strongly advocated a non-military solution to the conflict during the pre-invasion period, warned on 20 February 2022 that an invasion of Americans into the 'historical space' of Russia was not welcome:

³³ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 22.05.2022. In the Relations Between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, We Must go Through this Difficult Period. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-vo-vzaimootnosheniyakh-mezhdu-russkoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkovyu-i-rimsko-katolichesk.html>.

³⁴ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 15.02.2022b. The Council Decision on the Yekaterinburg Remains will Become Mandatory for the Entire Church. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-sobornoe-reshenie-po-ekaterinburgskim-ostankam-stanet-obyazatelnyy-dlya-vsey-tser.html>. [hereinafter: **Hilarion**, 15.02.2022b]

³⁵ **Patriarch Kirill**, 07.04.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/5915151.html>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 07.04.2022]

³⁶ **Patriarch Kirill**, 27.02.2022. Patriarch Kirill Urged Believers to Pray for Peace and Unity of the Church. <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89032/>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 27.02.2022]

³⁷ **Kirill**, 20.03.2022.

*We remember well how the Americans acted in the Middle East, what the situation in Iraq was after their invasion, what happened in Libya. I would very much not like to see anything like this happen again in our historical space.*³⁸

The narrative of ‘Lenin, divider of historical Russia’, which was a core “historic line” in the Putin’s 24 February 2022 justification of “military operations” against Ukraine,³⁹ appeared in Patriarch Kirill’s discourse on Ukraine only at the end of May 2022:

*Today we remember terrible events in the history of our Fatherland. First, the decision on the division of Russia, which was made by the then leader Lenin. Until then, the enemies sought to divide the united Rus, and the Kiev princes, then the princes of Moscow, tsars, emperors stood on the protection of the unity of the country. But such a gentleman or comrade came and liquidated a single country, creating independent states on the territory of historical Russia.*⁴⁰

The final subcategory ‘One Common Political Identity’ is only articulated by Patriarch Kirill and after the start of the invasion. Kirill highlights that “the Russian and Ukrainian peoples have a common centuries-old history”⁴¹, and they “/.../ are connected by a common historical destiny.”⁴² He calls for the

³⁸ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 20.02.2022a. The Church Prays that the Conflict between Russia and the West will be Resolved Peacefully. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-tserkov-molitsya-chtoby-konflikt-rossii-i-zapada-reshilsya-mirnym-putem.html>.

³⁹ **Putin, V.** 2022. Address by the President of the Russian Federation. – President of Russia, 24 February, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67843>. Marlene Laruelle and Ivan Grek identified three ideological lines in the abovementioned speech: 1) The Historic line: Ukraine as a Bolshevik Creation; 2) The Ethnic line: the genocide of Russians; 3) The Political Line: “Denazification”. **Laruelle, M.; Grek, I.** 2022. Decoding Putin’s Speeches: The Three Ideological lines of Russia’s Military Intervention in Ukraine, 25 February. <https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/decoding-putins-speeches-three-ideological-lines-russias-military-intervention-ukraine>. A similar narrative – ‘modern Ukraine is the product of Soviet era’, Bolsheviks transformed one single Russia into three Slavic nations – was also the main theme in 12 July 2021 speech of Vladimir Putin. **Putin, V.** 2021. On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians. – President of Russia, 12 July. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

⁴⁰ **Patriarch Kirill**, 29.05.2022. The Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the 6th Week of Easter after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5931598.html>.

⁴¹ **Patriarch Kirill**, 24.02.2022. Address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to Archpastors, Pastors, Monks and All Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5903795.html>.

⁴² **Patriarch Kirill**, 10.03.2022. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill Sent a Message to the Acting Secretary General of the WCC in Connection with the Events in Ukraine. <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89069/>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 10.03.2022]

protection of the unity of historical Russia “/.../ especially in connection with the attempts of the forces that act against the interests of the Russian world, to break this world /.../.”⁴³ On 17 May 2022 he questions the legitimacy of the post-Soviet Ukrainian state and government:

*I am convinced that the right lessons should be drawn from what is happening in Ukraine by assessing the experiment that was carried out on the Ukrainian people after the collapse of the USSR.*⁴⁴

Table 5. Coded quotes of the category WAR

Subcategories and codes	Kirill			Hilarion			Total
	I	II	III	I	II	III	
‘Spiritually fraternal peoples do not fight’	0	5	6	2	0	0	13
‘Internecine strife’		3	3				6
‘Fraternal war’ caused by the enemies of Russia		2		1			3
Wars of liberation/protection of fraternal peoples			2	1			3
Spiritual brothers cannot be in conflict			1				1
Peace conditioned by unity	0	12	1	0	0	0	13
Peace as the end of division; (fraternal) unity of Ukrainians and Russians as a goal		12	1				13
Religious demonization of the enemy	0	5	4	0	0	0	9
‘The enemy of the human race’		3	3				6
The enemies are ‘against (the will of) God’		1	1				2
‘War between Orthodox brothers is a devil’s work’		1					1
Defensive war	0	3	5	0	0	0	8
Legitimizing the defensive war		2	2				4
Defending (Russian) independence			3				3
NATO enlargement as a cause of conflict		1					1
Explaining the present by the examples of World Wars	0	0	6	0	0	1	7
Victory over Nazism (and Fascism) during WWII			3				3
Heroic defence of Fatherland and Achieved Victory during WWII inspire today			3				3
ROC ‘helps the front’						1	1

⁴³ **Patriarch Kirill**, 24.05.2022. Speech of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on Monday of Bright Week after the Liturgy in the Patriarchal Assumption Cathedral. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5920989.html>.

⁴⁴ **Kirill**, 17.05.2022.

Subcategories and codes	Kirill			Hilarion			Total
	I	II	III	I	II	III	
ROC during the time of war	0	1	4	0	1	2	8
Humanitarian mission of the Church (to help refugees and internally displaced persons)					1	1	2
‘Wartime’			1			1	1
Religion (prayer, blessing) makes troops victorious		1	3				4
Diplomacy, not war	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
‘War is not a conflict solution method’				2			2
‘War may have disastrous consequences for Russia’					1		1
Quotes	0	26	25	4	2	3	62

I – 25.01.2022–23.02.2022; II – 24.02.2022–02.04.2022; III – 03.04.2022–03.06.2022.

Patriarch Kirill did not discuss themes related to war before the invasion. Metropolitan Hilarion spoke more before and scarcely at all after the invasion. In Table 5, a total of 51 coded quotes out of 62 are from Kirill, all from the period after the start of the invasion.

As the quantitative difference is significant, the focus is first on Metropolitan Hilarion. He did not articulate any themes of ‘conditional peace’ or ‘defensive war’. He did not engage in religious demonization of the enemy. Before the invasion, he advocated for ‘diplomacy, not war’ (a theme not articulated by Kirill):

We must also remember that the outcome of war is unpredictable. Can we assume that Russia won the First World War? Let’s remember with what enthusiasm Russia entered it, what patriotic feelings accompanied Russia’s entry into this war. Could anyone have imagined then that Russia would collapse in three years? For all these reasons, I am deeply convinced that war is not a method of solving the accumulated political problems.⁴⁵

Hilarion emphasized the humanitarian mission of the Church when the invasion started.⁴⁶ His only direct message on the Church’s contribution to

⁴⁵ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 31.01.2022. War is not a Method of Solving Accumulated Political Problems. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-voyna-eto-ne-metod-resheniya-nakopivshikhsya-politicheskikh-problem.html>.

⁴⁶ Hilarion says: “Many dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia are involved in collecting aid for refugees. Many people host refugees, including in monasteries and temples. Where it is possible to accommodate refugees, they are granted asylum.” **Metropolitan**

the war effort was in the code about how ROC ‘helped the front’ during the Second World War:

From the very first day of the Great Patriotic War, the Church was with its people. The first person to address the people on the radio was Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow and Kolomna. He did it even before Stalin addressed the people. ... Then, throughout the Great Patriotic War, the Church was very active in helping the front. With the money collected by the Church, a tank column named after Dmitry Donskoy was created. Many clergymen visited the front line, helped refugees. Wherever the Church was allowed, it was present.⁴⁷

Patriarch Kirill called the war in Ukraine ‘internecine strife’ (междоусобная брань), that is an internal matter, civil war or civil conflict for the Russian state. He called upon God to “/.../ protect the peoples who are part of the common space of the Russian Orthodox Church from internecine strife”⁴⁸ and to “/.../ protect the Russian land from internecine warfare and from the invasion of foreigners.”⁴⁹

In Kirill’s approach, spiritually fraternal peoples do not fight – “/.../ the peoples of Russia and Ukraine /.../ cannot have an interest in the conflict”⁵⁰ –, therefore the war between brothers had to be caused by external actors, enemies of Russia.⁵¹ Enemies “from the outside are trying to convince them [Ukrainian and Russian peoples] that you are not brothers but enemies, and you must fight each other.”⁵²

Invoking reminders of the First World War and Russo-Turkish wars of the 19th century, both Kirill and Hilarion argued that Russia entered into these wars not to acquire land or to gain power, but to help fraternal peoples. Russia

Hilarion, 27.03.2022. It is Important that Representatives of the Largest Christian Churches Communicate with Each Other at this Critical Moment. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-vazhno-chtoby-predstaviteli-krupneyshikh-khristianskikh-tserkvey-obshchalis-mezhd.html>.

⁴⁷ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 08.05.2022. The Church is Doing a Great Job to Help the Victims of the Confrontation in Ukraine. <<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-tserkov-provodit-ogromnyu-rabotu-po-pomoshchi-postradavshim-ot-protivostoyaniya-.html>>.

⁴⁸ **Kirill**, 27.02.2022.

⁴⁹ **Patriarch Kirill**, 03.05.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on the Day of Radonitsa after the Liturgy in the Archangel Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5922848.html>.

⁵⁰ **Kirill**, 17.05.2022.

⁵¹ **Kirill**, 10.03.2022.

⁵² **Kirill**, 09.03.2022.

entered the First World War “in order to save the fraternal Serbian people.”⁵³ In the 19th century, Russia helped the Greeks and Serbs in their struggle for independence. Hilarion summarizes that “there is a completely obvious and indisputable fact: it lies in the fact that Russia, as an Orthodox state, for many centuries helped the Greek people, the Balkan and other Orthodox peoples not only in their struggle for independence, but also in the struggle for survival.”⁵⁴

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Kirill repeatedly emphasised the goal of peace and argued: “The Church cannot carry any signal other than peacemaking /.../.”⁵⁵ His message of peace, however, is always conditional; it demands (fraternal) unity of Russians and Ukrainians. Or, to say it in reverse form, there will be no peace without this unity. Kirill says:

*/.../ we must do everything to preserve peace between our peoples and at the same time protect our common historical Fatherland from all actions from the outside that can destroy this unity.*⁵⁶

*/.../ I call on all of you, my dear ones, first of all, to intensify the prayer that all military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine will cease, so that our people will once again be able to realize the presence of common spiritual roots and a common spiritual power, which is our undivided Church, which resides in Russia, in Ukraine and in other countries.*⁵⁷

After the start of the invasion, Patriarch Kirill used the rhetoric of religious demonisation.⁵⁸ He linked the forces that seek to destroy the Russian land, and

⁵³ **Patriarch Kirill**, 08.05.2022. Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the 3rd Week after Easter after the Liturgy in the Main Church of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5924172.html>.

⁵⁴ **Hilarion**, 08.02.2022.

⁵⁵ **Patriarch Kirill**, 18.03.2022. Speech by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the Meeting of the Supreme Church Council on March 18, 2022. <https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89086/>. [hereinafter: **Kirill**, 18.03.2022]

⁵⁶ **Kirill**, 27.02.2022.

⁵⁷ **Kirill**, 09.03.2022.

⁵⁸ Demonisation is a rhetorical strategy to attribute (absolute) moral evil to the enemy. Secular demonisation may involve attributing Nazism to enemies, which represents radical evil. **Ciuriak, D.** 2022. Every Casus Belli Is False: Deconstructing Russia's Case for War on Ukraine. – Norwich University News Edition: Voices on Peace and War, 24 June. <https://www.norwich.edu/news/voices-from-the-hill/peace-and-war/3850-every-casus-belli-is-false-deconstructing-russia-s-case-for-war-on-ukraine>. Devil, antichrist and ‘the enemy of the human race’ represent religiously defined (absolute) moral evil in religious demonisation.

“to pit the brother against the brother”, with “the coming of the antichrist into the world,”⁵⁹ and claimed that the enemies were “against our unity, against our spiritual roots /.../ against the will of God.”⁶⁰ He directly attributed the war between Orthodox brothers to the devil:

*/.../ any war between Orthodox brothers belonging to the one Church is a devil's work, not God's. /.../ and, with the protection of the Cross to drive away all power that is demonic and of the enemy (вражий) from our common life and from our destiny.*⁶¹

Patriarch Kirill encourages defensive war and represents the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a defensive war for Russian independence, that is to say a war that takes place on Russian soil. Kirill claimed that Russia has never attacked anyone:

*We don't want to fight anybody. Russia has never attacked anyone. It is amazing that a great and powerful country has never attacked anyone – it has only defended its borders.*⁶²

Thus, despite Russian aggression in Ukraine being obvious to all, Kirill claims that Russia is not engaged in a war of aggression; Russia simply protects its land, borders and independence. In his narrative, Russia is not even fighting Ukraine, it is fighting with the powerful (Western) forces in the world. According to Kirill, the independence of Russia is to be defended “/.../ from the powerful centres of power that exist today on earth.”⁶³

Having constructed reality in this manner, Kirill expects religion and ROC not to remain passive and neutral bystanders. Kirill reminds that religion (blessing or prayer by religious leaders or saints) makes troops victorious. In the 14th century, the religious blessing of Saint Sergius (of Radonezh) made Dmitry Donskoy victorious over the Tatar-Mongol army.⁶⁴ Victory

⁵⁹ Kirill, 07.04.2022.

⁶⁰ Kirill, 09.03.2022.

⁶¹ Kirill, 09.03.2022.

⁶² Kirill, 03.05.2022.

⁶³ Patriarch Kirill, 25.04.2022. Speech of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on Monday of Bright Week after the Liturgy in the Patriarchal Assumption Cathedral. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5920989.html>. [hereinafter: Kirill, 25.04.2022]

⁶⁴ Kirill, 20.03.2022.

in the Second World War was “/.../ directly connected with St. George the Victorious” who “/.../ before the throne of God prayed for the Russian land.”⁶⁵

Although not extensively, nevertheless, the core justifications of the invasion of Ukraine presented by secular leaders (Russian president Vladimir Putin and foreign minister Sergei Lavrov) started to emerge one by one in Kirill's speeches after 24 February 2022. For example, in one instance Kirill mentions NATO enlargement as a cause of conflict:

*Over time, however, forces that openly view Russia as an enemy have come close to its borders. NATO countries are building up their military power year after year, month after month, oblivious to Russia's fears that these weapons will one day turn against it.*⁶⁶

In May 2022 (partly because the annual celebrations of the Victory in WWII take place in this month) Kirill emphasized that “[t]he memory of the victory over Nazism has become a truly important part of the cultural code of the Russian people, an inspiring symbol of unity.”⁶⁷ Additionally, he argues that attempts to rehabilitate “the inhuman Nazi ideology /.../ in particular in Ukraine” are unacceptable and “cause deep moral rejection.”⁶⁸ Like Putin and Lavrov, Kirill referred to the Second World War with implications for the present conflict:

*/.../ Suffice it to recall the heroic defence of Smolensk, when the enemy passed through the fortress walls, and only one cathedral remained as the last fortress and refuge for the defenders of the city. /.../ May all these wonderful heroic examples still inspire us today to defend the Fatherland.*⁶⁹

⁶⁵ **Patriarch Kirill**, 06.05.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on the Feast Day of the Great Martyr George the Victorious after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5923691.html>.

⁶⁶ **Kirill**, 10.03.2022.

⁶⁷ **Patriarch Kirill**, 09.05.2022. Congratulations of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on Victory Day. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5923212.html>.

⁶⁸ **Kirill**, 17.05.2022. Vladimir Putin and Sergei Lavrov started the invasion of Ukraine with the narrative of ‘denazification’ of Ukraine. Patriarch Kirill referred to this theme for the first time on 9 May 2022.

⁶⁹ **Kirill**, 25.04.2022. For a comparison of messages of religious leaders (Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Hilarion) and secular leaders (President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov) 30 days before the war and 30 days after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, see **Kilp, A.; Pankhurst, J. G.** 2022. Soft, Sharp, and Evil Power: The Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. – Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe, Vol. 42, No. 5, Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2361>.

Finally, both Hilarion and Kirill recognised in the third period (from 3 April until 3 June) that these are the ‘wartimes’. Their emphases, however, were quite different. Kirill argued that “/.../ in wartime service in the Armed Forces is a real feat, and this is the time we are now experiencing.”⁷⁰ While Kirill heroized involvement in the war effort, Hilarion focused more on the distance that exists between the religious mission of the Church and activities of the state. He argued that in war, the Church “cannot directly influence the course of negotiations or the course of hostilities.”⁷¹

Table 6. Coded quotes of the category WEST

Subcategories and codes	Kirill			Hilarion			Total
	I	II	III	I	II	III	
Criticism of Western values	1	5	4	5	0	1	16
‘West has abandoned traditional/Christian values’	1	1	2	2			6
‘West imposes/promotes non-traditional sexual relations (e.g. Gay Pride Parades)’		3		2			5
‘West follows immoral values’				1		1	2
(Cultural) independence of Russia has to be protected from the West		1	1				2
Respectful dialogue with the West			1				1
West is the threat and enemy	0	4	6	2	0	0	12
‘West is the cause of escalation, conflict and war’		1	4	2			7
‘West has turned Ukraine into Anti-Russia’		1					1
‘West aims to weaken Russia’		1					1
‘Russophobia is spreading in the West’		1	1				2
Peter I (emulation of the West laid foundation for 1917 anti-religious revolution)			1				1

⁷⁰ **Patriarch Kirill**, 03.04.2022. Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the Week of the 4th Great Lent after the Liturgy in the Main Church of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/5914188.html>.

⁷¹ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 09.05.2022. Metropolitan Hilarion Spoke about the Work Carried out by the Church in the Context of the Political Confrontation in Ukraine. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-rasskazal-o-rabote-kotoruyu-vedet-tserkov-v-usloviyakh-politicheskogo-protivostoya.html>.

Subcategories and codes	Kirill			Hilarion			Total
	I	II	III	I	II	III	
Ambiguous relations with the Roman Catholic Church	0	0	0	3	3	0	6
Collaborative relations with the Roman Catholic Church in (religious, educational) issues unrelated to Ukraine				3	1		4
RCC is perceived to be (not responsible, but) involved in supporting the autocephalous OCU					2		2
Quotes	1	9	9	10	3	1	34

I – 25.01.2022–23.02.2022; II – 24.02.2022–02.04.2022; III – 03.04.2022–03.06.2022.

The messages of Kirill and Hilarion in the category WEST are identical qualitatively; they both condemn Western values and consider the West to be the cause of conflicts with Russia. The main difference is quantitative; Kirill does not discuss relations with the Roman Catholic Church, and examples of criticism of the West come twice as much from Kirill as from Hilarion. They agree with each other even when on a particular theme one of them talks less or is silent.

At the beginning of February 2022, Patriarch Kirill argued that in the 15th Century, when Byzantium lost its positions in world politics, Europe was in a period of Renaissance with the focus shifting from Christianity to pagan anthropocentrism:

/.../ the pagan worldview and pagan culture were being revived. Not in the sense that idol worship was being revived, but in the sense that pagan anthropocentrism, that is, the doctrine of the centrality of man, not God, captured the consciousness of Europeans.⁷²

Condemnation of the contemporary post-Christian West appear in Kirill's statements after the start of the invasion:

However, in modern times, dangerous, in my opinion, ideas appeared in the West and then became widespread, based on the denial of the Christian heritage and on the acceptance of moral relativism as a certain principle on which relations between people should be built. Unfortunately, over the past centuries, these ideas have only intensified and led to the fact that European society began to revise unshakable Christian values /.../.⁷³

⁷² Patriarch Kirill, 01.02.2022. Sermon by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill after the Liturgy in the Alexander Nevsky Skete on the Thirteenth Anniversary of the Enthronement of His Holiness. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5892693.html>.

⁷³ Kirill, 17.05.2022.

In mid-February 2022, Metropolitan Hilarion commented the court case of a Finnish politician Päivi Räsänen.⁷⁴ Charges of hate speech were brought against Räsänen in 2021 regarding a pamphlet “As Man and Woman He Created Them: Homosexuality and the Challenge to the Christian Concept of Man” (published in 2004), her comments in radio and social media, and an Instagram post with a picture of Romans 1:24-27.⁷⁵ Hilarion responded:

Representatives of the Christian denominations of Russia came out in defence of Päivi Räsänen /.../ whose “crime” is that she quoted the Bible. Indeed, if quoting the Bible is now becoming a crime in Finland, then what times do we live in? The political correctness that operates in the European Union, in Western society, contradicts biblical teaching on a number of points, but Christian Churches cannot arbitrarily change the Holy Scriptures, just as they cannot arbitrarily change the Holy Tradition. /.../ Päivi Räsänen /.../ was not afraid to recall these biblical words. For this, she is now being prosecuted and faces a prison term. /.../ As for the position of the Russian Orthodox Church and the position of the Christian confessions of Russia, it coincides, and it is no coincidence that we issued a joint statement in support of Ms. Räsänen.⁷⁶

In March 2022, Patriarch Kirill argued that “the real reason” for the war in Ukraine is the Western promotion of the rights of non-traditional sexual relations:

/.../ in the Donbass there is rejection, a fundamental rejection of the so-called values that are offered today by those who claim world power. Today there is a test for the loyalty to this new world order /.../. The demands on many to hold a gay parade are a test of their loyalty to the new world order; and we know that if people or countries reject these demands, then they do not enter into that world order, they become strangers to it.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Päivi Räsänen is a member of the Finnish Parliament (since 1995), former Minister of Interior (2011–2015), chairman of the Christian Democrats (2004–2015) in Finland. Police investigations against Räsänen started in June 2019. In April 2021, Finland’s Prosecutor General brought three criminal charges against Räsänen. In March 2022 the Helsinki District Court acquitted Räsänen of all charges. The Helsinki Court of Appeal will conduct the hearings of Päivi Räsänen case on 22–24 August 2023.

⁷⁵ **Thacker, J.; Wootten, J.** 2022. Explainer: What you should know about Finland, Päivi Räsänen, and hate speech. 1 April. – The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/explainer-what-you-should-know-about-finland-paivi-rasanen-and-hate-speech/>.

⁷⁶ **Hilarion**, 15.02.2022b.

⁷⁷ **Patriarch Kirill**, 07.03.2022. Patriarchal Sermon in Cheesefare Week After the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5906442.html>.

According to Hilarion, Western propaganda of LGBT and non-traditional sexual relations “are imposed in the West”, and is aiming to destroy families in Russia.⁷⁸ Western society has legalized “an immoral way of life” by teaching primary school children that:

.../ homosexuality is good; if you are a boy or a girl by biological sex, it means nothing, you have to determine which gender you want to belong to; if you want to belong to the opposite sex, then the doctors will help you and make an operation. There is a massive propaganda of unnatural vices, an unnatural way of life, thereby destroying the family, the traditional family way of life.⁷⁹

Hilarion’s position regarding Western values did not change throughout the period of this study. In May 2022, he argued that movements for freedom have been growing and expanding in the West presupposing “complete emancipation, liberation from moral bonds and foundations, from prohibitions that have existed for centuries.”⁸⁰

In May 2022, Kirill claimed Russia must protect its “cultural sovereignty”, because sovereignty is not only political, but also cultural, and respectful dialogue with Western countries and Russia is possible when dialogue is based on civilizational and value differences.⁸¹

Both Hilarion (who presented such arguments before the invasion) and Kirill (who raised this theme after the start of the invasion) attribute the cause of conflicts and war to the West.

At the end of January 2022, Hilarion said that both the Russian and Ukrainian leadership were sure that there was no imminent threat of Russia attacking Ukraine: “But America persistently continues to instil in its Western partners that Russia is preparing for an attack and therefore needs to take embassy personnel out of Ukraine and prepare for a full-scale war.”⁸² Hilarion delivered “War is not a Conflict Solution Method” and “diplomacy, not war” messages in the situation where he believed that warnings about Russia

⁷⁸ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 21.02.2022. Metropolitan Hilarion Urged to Protect Russians from Propaganda of Western “Values”. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-prizval-zashchitit-rossiyan-ot-propagandy-zapadnykh-tsennostey.html>.

⁷⁹ **Hilarion**, 08.02.2022.

⁸⁰ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 01.05.2022. The Church is Called to Unite People Regardless of their Political Orientation. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-tserkov-prizvana-obedinyat-lyudey-vne-zavisimosti-ot-ikh-politicheskoy-orientatsii.html>.

⁸¹ **Kirill**, 17.05.2022.

⁸² **Hilarion**, 31.01.2022.

preparing for an invasion of Ukraine were unfounded (and blamed the United States for stirring up fears of a Russian invasion). He was mistakenly confident that Russia would not start a full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine.

Additionally, Kirill blamed the West for having caused the First World War: “The West did not want to have among its peoples this courageous Orthodox, Russia-loving people, and provoked the First World War.”⁸³ The Western example had motivated Tsar Peter I to secularize relations between the church and state, which “led to the division of society, and as a result to revolutionary events [of 1917].”⁸⁴ Western teachings (e.g., “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”) motivated “the revolutionary events of 1917 and the subsequent civil war in Russia.”⁸⁵

According to Kirill, the origins of the present conflict in the territory of Ukraine lie in the relations between the West and Russia of the 1990s,⁸⁶ Western powers seek to weaken Russia in global geopolitics,⁸⁷ have used the colonial policy of “divide and rule”, have caused internecine conflict, and have escalated Russian-Ukrainian enmity.⁸⁸ Kirill interprets the economic sanctions on Russia as evidence of Russophobia spreading “at an unprecedented pace in the Western world.”⁸⁹

Only Hilarion discusses relations with the Roman Catholic Church (hereinafter RCC). His messages before the start of the invasion are positive. He emphasizes collaboration with the RCC in France in the field of pilgrimage,⁹⁰

⁸³ Kirill, 08.05.2022

⁸⁴ Kirill, 17.05.2022

⁸⁵ Kirill, 17.05.2022

⁸⁶ Kirill, 10.03.2022. Constructed largely in the early 2000s, the negative framing of the Yeltsin decade became central to the official legitimizing discourse of Putin’s regime. **Malinova, O.** 2021. Framing the Collective Memory of the 1990s as a Legitimation Tool for Putin’s Regime. – Problems of Post-Communism, Vol. 68, No. 5, pp. 429–441.

⁸⁷ Kirill, 10.03.2022.

⁸⁸ Kirill, 17.05.2022. For analysis of Russian narratives of the global order (and of the West), see **Miskimmon, A.; O’Loughlin, B.** 2017. Russia’s Narratives of Global Order: Great Power Legacies in a Polycentric World. – Politics and Governance, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 111–120.

⁸⁹ Kirill, 10.03.2022.

⁹⁰ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 13.02.2022a. Prospects for the Development of Pilgrimage were Discussed at the Orthodox-Catholic Conference in Paris. <https://hilarion.ru/social/perspektivy-razvitiya-palomnichestva-obsudili-na-pravoslavno-katolicheskoy-konferentsii-v-parizhe.html>.

student exchange and cooperation in the fields of culture,⁹¹ inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian relations.⁹² Hilarion says: “Our other partner remains the Roman Catholic Church, with which we have the closest positions on moral issues.”⁹³

In March 2022, however, he claims that the RCC has partial responsibility for the emergence of the autocephalous OCU:

*/.../ the initiative to grant autocephaly comes not from the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the majority Church in Ukraine, but from local schismatics, biased politicians, as well as Uniates, who consider autocephaly as the first step towards uniting the Orthodox with the Greek Catholics under the omophorion of the Pope.*⁹⁴

Table 7. Coded quotes of the category DECR and MFA

Codes	Kirill			Hilarion			Total
	I	II	III	I	II	III	
The mission of the Russian state is to protect Christians in the Middle East and Africa				4	1		5
The Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa of the ROC is created to counter religious persecution of Christians in the Middle East and Africa				4			4
Russia is an outpost of Christian civilization in the world			1				1
Quotes	0	0	1	8	1	0	10

I – 25.01.2022–23.02.2022; II – 24.02.2022–02.04.2022; III – 03.04.2022–03.06.2022.

⁹¹ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 13.02.2022b. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk Met with Cardinal Kurt Koch. <https://hilarion.ru/social/sostoyalas-vstrecha-mitropolita-volokolamskogo-ilariona-s-kardinalom-kurtom-kokhom.html>.

⁹² **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 15.02.2022a. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk met with Bishop Philippe Christory of Chartres. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-volokolamskiy-ilarion-vstretilsya-s-episkopom-shartskim-filippom-khristori.html>.

⁹³ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 09.03.2022. At the Meeting of the Scientific Lecture Hall “Krapivensky 4” the Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the International Arena was discussed. <https://hilarion.ru/social/na-zasedanii-nauchnogo-lektoriya-krapivenskiy-4-obsudili-rol-russkoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkvi-na-mezhdun.html>.

⁹⁴ **Hilarion**, 15.03.2022.

Due to the position of the Chairman of DECR, Hilarion discussed relations between ROC and the Russian Federation in international affairs more than Kirill.

Hilarion argued that DECR is

*.../ sometimes called the Church Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is not entirely fair, since we are engaged not only in foreign affairs, but also in interfaith relations in our Fatherland. And in recent years, we increasingly feel like a kind of defence department, because we have to defend the sacred borders of our Church.*⁹⁵

The main example of the existing collaboration between DECR and MFA⁹⁶, and of the need for it, is the persecution of Christians in Africa who “look with hope at Russia and its President, at the Russian Church and its Patriarch,”⁹⁷ and who “need Russia’s protection.”⁹⁸ The main institutions serving this goal are the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa of the ROC and the Interreligious Working Group on the Protection of the Rights of Believers from Discrimination and Xenophobia of the Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations under the President of Russia.⁹⁹

Patriarch Kirill delivered only one statement that falls into this category: “... I have repeatedly said that there have been no easy times in our history. And now the Russian world is again becoming an outpost of Christian civilization.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 02.02.2022. The President of Russia presented Metropolitan Hilarion with the Order of Alexander Nevsky. <https://hilarion.ru/social/prezident-rossii-vruchil-mitropolitu-ilarionu-orden-aleksandra-nevskogo.html>. [hereinafter: **Hilarion**, 02.02.2022]

⁹⁶ For an in-depth study on relations between the ROC and the Russian Federation in international affairs, see **G. Soroka**. 2022. International Relations by Proxy? The Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church. – Religions, Vol. 13, No. 3, 208. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030208>.

⁹⁷ **Hilarion**, 02.02.2022.

⁹⁸ **Hilarion**, 08.02.2022.

⁹⁹ **Metropolitan Hilarion**, 04.02.2022a. Russian Church will Continue Efforts to Support Persecuted Christians in Africa. <https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-russkaya-tserkov-prodolzhit-usiliya-po-podderzhke-presleduemym-khristian-afriki.html>.

¹⁰⁰ **Patriarch Kirill**, 23.05.2022. Speech by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the Plenary Session of the XXX International Educational Readings. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5928249.html>.

3. Conclusions

The general pattern of collaboration between the Russian government and the ROC in international affairs and in the invasion of Ukraine is well known. This article has analysed in detail the messages of religious leaders 30 days before and 100 days after the start of the invasion on February 24, 2022 with the intention of identifying content related to secular and religious conflict in Ukraine, and mapping changes to such content over time.

The findings highlight that the common perception of collaboration between religious and secular leaders in Russian foreign policy is generally correct. However, less well known is the division of labour between secular and religious leaders. While they both deny independent subjectivity and the agency of Ukrainians, secular leaders focus most on concerns related to military and security, deny the political sovereignty of the Ukrainian nation, and consider the West (and NATO) to be the 'real' enemy. Religious leaders of the ROC deny the legitimacy of the agency of the autocephalous OCU, promote the religious ideology of the "Russian world", and consider the Patriarch of Constantinople to be their key enemy.

A similar pattern of collaboration and 'division of labour' was found among religious leaders. Metropolitan Hilarion and Patriarch Kirill agreed in their interpretation of the situation within the frames of the ideology of the "Russian world" who was to be blamed for the war and conflict escalation, and what was 'wrong' with Western culture and values. Unlike Patriarch Kirill, Hilarion avoided the heroization of religious involvement in the war effort, did not demonise the enemy religiously, and focused more on the distance that should exist between the religious mission of the Church and state activities even in 'times of war'. Whether this difference between Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Hilarion was an instrumental and strategic 'division of labour' in the public communication of religious leaders, or became one of the reasons why Metropolitan Hilarion was dismissed from the office of the Chairman of the DECR on the 104th day of the war (June 7, 2022), remains a relevant question to be addressed by further studies.

Appendix

Selected Texts of Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Hilarion in Chronological Order

Patriarch Kirill

- 01.02.2022. Sermon by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill after the Liturgy in the Alexander Nevsky Skete on the Thirteenth Anniversary of the Enthronement of His Holiness.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5892693.html>.
- 23.02.2022. On the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill Laid a Wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Kremlin Wall.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5903402.html>.
- 24.02.2022. Address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to Archpastors, Pastors, Monks and All Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5903795.html>.
- 27.02.2022. Patriarch Kirill Urged Believers to Pray for Peace and Unity of the Church.
<https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89032/>.
- 05.03.2022. Reply of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria.
<https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89045/>.
- 07.03.2022. Patriarchal Sermon in Cheesefare Week After the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5906442.html>.
- 09.03.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on Wednesday of the First Week of Great Lent after the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5907484.html>.
- 10.03.2022. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill Sent a Message to the Acting Secretary General of the WCC in Connection with the Events in Ukraine.
<https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89069/>.
- 12.03.2022. Congratulations of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill Katalin Novak on her Election as President of Hungary.
<https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89072/>.
- 13.03.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on the Week of the Triumph of Orthodoxy after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5908325.html>.
- 18.03.2022. Speech by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the Meeting of the Supreme Church Council on March 18, 2022.
<https://mospat.ru/ru/news/89086/>.
- 20.03.2022. Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the Week of the 2nd Great Lent after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5909901.html>.
- 03.04.2022. Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the Week of the 4th Great Lent after the Liturgy in the Main Church of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/5914188.html>.

- 07.04.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/5915151.html>.
- 25.04.2022. Speech of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on Monday of Bright Week after the Liturgy in the Patriarchal Assumption Cathedral.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5920989.html>.
- 03.05.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on the Day of Radonitsa after the Liturgy in the Archangel Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5922848.html>.
- 06.05.2022. Patriarchal Sermon on the Feast Day of the Great Martyr George the Victorious after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5923691.html>.
- 08.05.2022. Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the 3rd Week after Easter after the Liturgy in the Main Church of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5924172.html>.
- 09.05.2022. Congratulations of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on Victory Day.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5923212.html>.
- 17.05.2022. Speech by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the X Parliamentary Meetings in the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5926129.html>.
- 23.05.2022. Speech by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the Plenary Session of the XXX International Educational Readings.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5928249.html>.
- 24.05.2022. Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the Feast Day of Equal-to-the-Apostles Methodius and Cyril after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5928701.html>.
- 29.05.2022. The Word of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the 6th Week of Easter after the Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.
<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5931598.html>.

Metropolitan Hilarion

- 31.01.2022. War is not a Method of Solving Accumulated Political Problems.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-voyna-eto-ne-metod-resheniya-nakopivshikhsya-politicheskikh-problem.html>.
- 02.02.2022. The President of Russia presented Metropolitan Hilarion with the Order of Alexander Nevsky.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/prezident-rossii-vruchil-mitropolitu-ilarionu-orden-aleksandra-nevskogo.html>.
- 04.02.2022a. Russian Church will Continue Efforts to Support Persecuted Christians in Africa.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-russkaya-tserkov-prodolzhit-usiliya-po-podderzhke-presleduemykh-khristian-afriki.html>.

- 04.02.2022b. On the Persecution of Christians in Africa told at a Press Conference in Moscow.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/o-gonenyakh-na-khristian-afriki-rasskazali-na-press-konferentsii-v-moskve.html>.
- 07.02.2022. The Russian Church is Forced to Create its own Parishes on the African Continent.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-russkaya-tserkov-vynuzhdena-soz-davat-svoi-prikhody-na-afrikanskom-kontinente.html>.
- 08.02.2022. Propaganda of an Unnatural Way of Life is a Great Tragedy of Western Society.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-propaganda-protivoestestvennogo-obraza-zhizni-eto-bolshaya-tragediya-zapadnogo-ob.html>.
- 12.02.2022. Inter-Orthodox Consultations on the Model of the Amman Conference are Necessary, Metropolitan Hilarion is Sure.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mezhpravoslavnye-konsultatsii-po-obraztsu-amman-skogo-soveshchaniya-neobkhodimy-uveren-mitropolit-ila.html>.
- 13.02.2022a. Prospects for the Development of Pilgrimage were Discussed at the Orthodox-Catholic Conference in Paris.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/perspektivy-razvitiya-palomnichestva-obsudili-na-pravoslavno-katolicheskoy-konferentsii-v-parizhe.html>.
- 13.02.2022b. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk Met with Cardinal Kurt Koch.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/sostoyalas-vstrecha-mitropolita-volokolamskogo-ilariona-s-kardinalom-kurtom-kokhom.html>.
- 14.02.2022a. Biblical Commandments Cannot be Changed by the Rules of Political Correctness.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-bibleyskie-zapovedi-ne-mogut-byt-izmeneny-pravilami-politkorrektnosti.html>.
- 14.02.2022b. Preparation of the Pan-Orthodox Council Should Take into Account the Real Needs and Interests of the Churches.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-podgotovka-vsepravoslavnnogo-sobora-dolzha-uchityvat-realnye-nuzhdy-i-interesy-ts.html>.
- 15.02.2022a. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk met with Bishop Philippe Chartres.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-volokolamskiy-ilarion-vstretilsya-s-episkopom-shartrskim-filippom-khristori.html>.
- 15.02.2022b. The Council Decision on the Yekaterinburg Remains will Become Mandatory for the Entire Church.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-sobornoe-reshenie-po-ekaterinburgskim-ostankam-stanet-obyazatelnym-dlya-vsey-tser.html>.
- 20.02.2022a. The Church Prays that the Conflict between Russia and the West will be Resolved Peacefully.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-tserkov-molitsya-chtoby-konflikt-rossii-i-zapada-reshilsya-mirnym-putem.html>.

- 20.02.2022b. DECR Chairman Met with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/predsdatel-ovtss-vstretilsya-s-blazhenneyshim-patriarkhom-ierusalimskim-feofilom-iii.html>.
- 21.02.2022. Metropolitan Hilarion Urged to Protect Russians from Propaganda of Western “Values”.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-prizval-zashchitit-rossiyan-ot-propagandy-zapadnykh-tsennostey.html>.
- 23.02.2022. The Russian Church Cherishes Divine Service in the Form in which it Inherited it from its Ancestors.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-russkaya-tserkov-dorozhit-bogosluzheniem-v-tom-vide-v-kakom-unasledovala-ego-ot-p.html>.
- 26.02.2022. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk’s Interview to Orthodoxie.com.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/intervyu-mitropolita-volokolamskogo-ilariona-izdaniyu-orthodoxie-com.html>.
- 03.03.2022. DECR Chairman Presented the Patriarchal Award to Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia M. L. Bogdanov.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/predsdatel-ovtss-vruchil-zamestityu-glavy-midrossii-m-l-bogdanovu-patriarshuyu-nagradu.html>.
- 09.03.2022. At the Meeting of the Scientific Lecture Hall “Krapivensky 4” the Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the International Arena was Discussed.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/na-zasedanii-nauchnogo-lektoriya-krapivenskiy-4-ob-sudili-rol-russkoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkvi-na-mezhdun.html>.
- 14.03.2022a. The Unity that Began from the Common Baptismal font of St. Vladimir cannot be Destroyed
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-nachavsheesya-ot-obshchey-kreshchalnoy-kupeli-svyatogo-vladimira-edinstvo-nevozmo.html>.
- 14.03.2022b. Sooner or Later the Church will Find Ways to Heal the Ukrainian Schism.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-ranshe-ili-pozzhe-tserkov-naydet-sposoby-dlya-istseleniya-ukrainskogo-raskola.html>.
- 14.03.2022c. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill’s Contribution to Strengthening Inter-Orthodox Unity Against the Backdrop of the Invasion of Ukraine by the Patriarchate of Constantinople (report by Metropolitan Hilarion).
<http://mospat.ru/ru/news/89080/>.
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<http://mospat.ru/ru/news/89080/>.
- 21.03.2022. The Figure of Rasputin was Extremely Controversial.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-figura-rasputina-byla-chrezvychno-protivorechivoy.html>.

- 27.03.2022. It is Important that Representatives of the Largest Christian Churches Communicate with Each Other at this Critical Moment.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-vazhno-chtoby-predstaviteli-krupneyshikh-khristianskikh-tserkvey-obshchalis-mezhd.html>.
- 01.05.2022. The Church is Called to Unite People Regardless of their Political Orientation.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-tserkov-prizvana-obedinyat-lyudey-vne-zavisimosti-ot-ikh-politicheskoy-orientatsi.html>.
- 08.05.2022. The Church is Doing a Great Job to Help the Victims of the Confrontation in Ukraine.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-tserkov-provodit-ogromnuyurabotu-po-pomoshchi-postradavshim-ot-protivostoyaniya-.html>.
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<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-hilarion-rasskazal-o-rabote-kotoruyu-vedet-tserkov-v-usloviyakh-politicheskoy-protivostoya.html>.
- 22.05.2022. In the Relations Between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, We Must go Through this Difficult Period.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-vo-vzaimootnosheniyyakh-mezhdurusskoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkovyu-i-rimsko-katolichesk.html>.
- 28.05.2022. We have Supported and will Continue to Support the Unity of Our Church.
<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-my-podderzhivali-i-budem-dalshe-podderzhivat-edinstvo-nashey-tserkvi.html>.
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<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-makedonskuyu-pravoslavnuyutserkov-nelzya-stavit-na-odnu-dosku-s-ukrainskimi-rask.html>.
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<https://hilarion.ru/social/mitropolit-ilarion-proiskhodyashchee-v-ukrainskoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkvi-sleduet-ponimat-v-kontekste-o.html>.

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